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SOME LANGUAGE ASPECTS OF THE U.S. ADVISORY ROLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

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A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED AMONG FIELD AND COMPANY GRADE U.S. ARMY OFFICERS WHO HAD SERVED TOURS OF DUTY IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES BETWEEN 1960 AND 1962. DATA WERE COLLECTED ON THE BASIS OF 97 RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES (OUT OF 129). THE AIM OF THE SURVEY WAS TO CONTRIBUTE TO A PROJECT TO DEVELOP A SHORT VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE COURSE. THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY SHOW THAT THE RESPONDENTS, WHO WERE SERVING IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY TO THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AND PARAMILITARY UNITS, RELIED ON THE USE OF TRANSLATORS AND PARALINGUISTIC (GESTURAL) MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. THE FINDINGS INDICATED THE IMPORTANCE OF CERTAIN CONTINGENCIES TO THE ACQUISITION OF SPOKEN VIETNAMESE, FOR EXAMPLE, ISOLATION FROM OTHER ENGLISH SPEAKERS, GREATER LENGTH OF THE ADVISOR'S TOUR OF DUTY, MORE FREQUENT ATTEMPTS TO SPEAK VIETNAMESE, WITNESSING OF COMBAT, AND THE VIETNAMESE COUNTERPARTS' ABILITY TO USE ENGLISH. THE RESPONDENTS CITED FOUR MAJOR AREAS IN WHICH THEY FELT THAT GREATER KNOWLEDGE WOULD HAVE BEEN ADVANTAGEOUS TO THEM--SOCIAL AMENITIES, IMMEDIATE ACTION PHRASES, QUERIES, AND GUIDANCE AND ADVISORY TERMS. THESE FINDINGS ARE BEING UTILIZED IN DEVELOPING SHORT, FUNCTIONAL PROGRAMED LANGUAGE COURSES. (KL)

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Alfred I. Fiks and John W. McCrary

November 1963

Research Memorandum

Task: MALT I

Language and Area Training Division

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SOME LANGUAGE ASPECTS OF THE U. S. ADVISORY ROLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM

This paper presents certain information regarding the role and verbal communication problems of the U. S. military in a strategic geopolitical area. The data come from a group of United States Army officers who had served tours of duty in South Vietnam. The survey yielding the data was conducted as part of a project aimed at developing a short, programmed course to enhance the Vietnamese language capability of U. S. Armed Forces personnel. It was deemed desirable in said project to have the course content based on an empirical determination of actual language needs. The present paper summarizes the findings of the content generation survey which was conducted to assess these needs. The survey was carried out as a best available approximation to on-the-spot observation of actual U. S.-Vietnamese interpersonal communication requirements.

The information to be described falls into five subject-matter areas, viz.: (1) length and character of duty assignments; (2) methods of communication between U. S. advisors and their Vietnamese counterparts; (3) the importance of language problems; (4) critical verbal communication incidents; and (5) non-duty contacts with Vietnamese nationals. In addition to frequency description data, this paper will also report on selected questionnaire response contingencies.

PROCEDURE

Questionnaire

The survey research instrument used in this project contained twenty-seven closed- and open-end questions. Its construction included pre-testing and revision. The questionnaire is reproduced in the Appendix.

Sample

Copies of the questionnaire were sent out during the latter part of 1962 to a group of 129 United States Army officers whose names were obtained from the Department of the Army.[1] The characteristics of this group were that: they were then stationed in the United States; they had served in one capacity or another in South Vietnam; and, they had returned to the United States between 1960 and 1962. Of these 129 officers, 97 (75%) returned the questionnaire in time for its inclusion in the data analysis. Fourteen respondents returned their form too late (for a total return of 86%), and no response was received from the

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[1]The cooperation of the Office of Personnel Operations in providing the names and addresses of these men is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

remaining 18 individuals. Thus, the findings reported in this paper are based upon the questionnaire returns from a sample of 97 field and company grade officers who had served tours of duty in Vietnam. No claim as to the representativeness of this sample for U. S. military assistance personnel elsewhere and/or at other times is intended. Vietnamese language requirements of other groups of U. S. military personnel assigned to Vietnam will, however, be largely inferred from this sample based on the constancy (or near constancy) of: the language, the geography, the climate, the technology, the diet, and other basic features of the culture.

RESULTS

The analysis of the survey data consists of: selected relative frequency descriptions and examination of certain relationships between responses on various questionnaire items.[2] Inferential explanatory statements are offered when reasonable.

Length and Character of Duty Assignment

Variation on both of these dimensions was known to be great. Some attempt at assessment was deemed necessary in order to specify more operationally the nature of the U. S. Army role in Vietnam.

Question A: How many months were you in Vietnam? (1)[3]

It is evident from Table 1 that the typical tour of duty for this group of respondents was twelve months. None had remained fewer than six months nor more than twenty-four months.

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[2]Excellent assistance in data analysis was rendered to the project by Pfc. Frank C. Gemar.

[3]Numbers in parentheses indicate the question item number on the original questionnaire as reproduced in the Appendix.

TABLE 1

LENGTHS OF TOURS OF DUTY SERVED IN SOUTH VIETNAM
BY U. S. ARMY OFFICERS

Months in Vietnam	Percentage of Respondents
7 through 11	9
12	61
13 through 24	30
	100%

Some insight into the role and functions of this group of U. S. officers is gained by an examination of the following data.

Question B: During your tour of duty in Vietnam, were you personally ever present when the enemy was engaged in active combat? (18)

Approximately one-half of the group (51%) replied to the question in the affirmative; the remainder in the negative. The latter sub-set, presumably, spent their tour of duty in large cities and/or training camps of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) or Civil Guard. We will deal later with some of the ramifications of witnessing or non-witnessing of combat. It will become clear, however, from the subsequent question that the main function of this sample of Army officers was not involvement in operations as such, but advising the ARVN and para-military groups in a variety of their non-combat activities.

Question C: In what kind of problem areas did your official advisory duties fall? (16)

In response to this question, the officers most often listed "Tactics training" and "Basic training." Only 16% indicated that advising with respect to combat operations had been their most frequent duty. The detailed distribution of responses is presented in Table 2. The categories contained therein are manifestly not mutually exclusive. Obvious overlap, for example, would be expected between the "Training in proper equipment operation" category and "Basic training"; similarly, advising with respect to "Combat operations" might be expected to overlap somewhat with "Operational planning."

Methods of Communication Between U. S. and Vietnamese Personnel

Interpersonal communication was carried out, in the main, through use of: English, Vietnamese, paralinguistic signaling (e.g., gestures), and interpreters. In some individual cases, French was reported as a useful communication medium.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGES OF OFFICERS INDICATING GIVEN ADVISORY AREA AS THAT INTO WHICH THEIR DUTIES MOST FREQUENTLY FELL

Advisory Area	Percentage of Respondents
Tactics Training and Basic Training	39
Operational Planning	23
Combat Operations	16
Operator Misuse and/or Lack of Knowledge and Training in Proper Operation of Equipment	7
Maintenance and/or Calibration of Equipment	6
Organization of ARVN	4
Acquisition and/or Storage of Equipment or Material	3
Transportation of ARVN Troops	1
Other Area or No Response	1
Total	100%

Question D: As a rule, how did you and your Vietnamese counterpart communicate? (6a)

Three-quarters (75%) of these officers reported that they and their counterparts spoke to one another in English. Only about one-fifth of the members of the sample (21%) indicated that, as a rule, an interpreter was needed for two-way translation. An additional 4% of the group reported that they spoke English directly to their counterparts who countered in Vietnamese which was then translated into English by an interpreter. The finding that, generally, US-ARVN counterpart communication was in English is corroborated by examining reports of the Vietnamese counterparts' English ability.

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGES OF U. S. OFFICERS REPORTING VIETNAMESE COUNTERPARTS WITH INDICATED LEVELS OF ABILITY IN SPEAKING AND UNDERSTANDING ENGLISH

Level of Ability	Counterpart Spoke	Counterpart Understood
Absolutely No English	0	0
A Couple of Words Only	13	8
A Fair Amount	29	33
Very Well	48	52
Like an American	7	10
Questionnaire Item Omitted	2	2
Totals	99%*	105%**

*Adds to less than 100% due to rounding error.
**Adds to more than 100% because some respondents selected more than one level of ability for their several counterparts.

Question E: How much English did your Vietnamese military counterpart speak? (5) (understand?) (4)

Inspection of Table 3 shows that over half of the advisors had Vietnamese counterparts who spoke and/or understood English at least "very well." It is significant to note that counterparts understanding less than "a fair amount" of English was reported by only 8% of the advisors. Counterparts speaking less than "a fair amount" of English were reported somewhat more frequently. It is evident that the counterparts of this group of U. S. Army officers were by and large quite adept in the usage of the English language.

Question F: In communicating with your counterpart, to what extent, if any, were gestures, nods, pointing, showing, etc., a factor? (17c)

Respondents differed considerably in the extent to which they indicated the use of such paralinguistic features. In their communications with their counterparts, 35% reported that such paralinguistic features were a factor to only a slight extent or not at all, while 36% felt these were a factor to a great or tremendous extent. Moderate usage of gestures, etc., was indicated by 27% of our sample.[4]

The finding of the general high utility of English in communicating with counterparts, and considerable dependence, at least on the part of some, on paralinguistic communication methods like gestures, seems noteworthy for this group, but may or may not reflect a general phenomenon.

With regard to the Americans' general usage of the Vietnamese language in communicating with Vietnamese nationals, the picture was fairly dismal. Apropos a list of vocabulary items that the respondent himself regarded as very critical and useful, the following question was put.

Question G: By and large, did you generally say (these) things in Vietnamese when you were there? (11)

More than three-quarters of the sample (76%) answered in the negative; 22%, affirmative; 2%, no response. Of the group that answered the question in the negative, 95% indicated that the reason for their non-usage of Vietnamese had been their inability to say the phrases in Vietnamese. The remaining 5% of the sample, though they considered themselves able, found it unnecessary to use Vietnamese because the other party had understood English or an interpreter had been present.

Question H: How often did you attempt to say anything in Vietnamese (other than names)? (3)

Well over half of this group of officers (61%) reported no more than occasional attempts to say anything in Vietnamese. A small 3% of the entire sample reported making such attempts "all the time." More than one-third, 36%, attempted such utilization "often" or "almost always." With regard to the use of interpreters, the following data were collected.

Question I: Did you ever use an interpreter on or off the job? (20)

All but 4% of the respondents reported making use of an interpreter at one or more points in time during their tour of duty in Vietnam. Interpreters, when used at all, were about 2 1/2 times more likely to be brought into play on the job than during leisure time.

In general, then, the American communicated with his Vietnamese counterpart largely in English and with the help of gestures. When verbal communications with non-English speaking Vietnamese were involved, interpreters appeared to play an overwhelming role.

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[4]Percentage breakdowns in the text will not add to 100% in all cases due to rounding error and/or the omission of items by some respondents.

Importance of Language Problems

The importance of verbal communication problems in Vietnam may be gauged by: the perceived language difficulties in the advisory process; the incidence of isolation from other English speakers; the adequacy of interpreters; and the extent to which the American develops his skill in Vietnamese on the spot.

In regard to the direct relevance of language barriers to the advisory process, the group was asked:

Question J: Might you have become aware of the most important problem on which you advised a counterpart earlier, or advised more effectively, had you known more Vietnamese? (17b)

The responses of the group were as follows:

"Positively yes"	31%
"Yes"	12
"Yes probably"	13
"Probably not"	20
"no"	16
"Absolutely not"	4
Item omitted	3
	99%

The reader will note that somewhat more than half of the group (56%) answered in the affirmative, while 40% answered in the negative. Moreover, few (4%) gave the strongest available negative response, while 31% responded emphatically in the affirmative. The modal or typical response of this sample of U. S. Army officers to this question was clearly a strong affirmative, although the mean response would be a milder positive. Large segments of the respondents felt that they could have advised both sooner and better had they known more of the Vietnamese language.

We may infer that the advantage in having greater skill in Vietnamese would apparently accrue primarily not because the U. S. officer could then understand and speak with his counterpart better (q.v., Question D above and Question K below) but because he would then be capable of receiving and integrating information from other sources.

Question K: How often, if ever, did any misunderstandings occur between yourself and your counterpart because you didn't know each other's language well enough? (6b)

The majority of this group (85%) reported that such misunderstandings seldom (62%) or never (23%) occurred, while only 13% reported they occurred often. This finding would be expected, of course, since as shown in Questions D and E above, most of the advisor counterpart verbal communication was in English. Alternatively, it is possible that misunderstandings occurred with greater frequency than reported due to the fact that advisors were not aware of them, making the incorrect assumption in speaking English that the nuances of the language were as clear to the listener as to the speaker.

Aside from the direct relevance of language to the advisory process, and the frequency of perceived misunderstandings, another fulcrum for the judgment as to the importance of Vietnamese language capability is the frequency of isolation from other English speakers that these men experienced and the general quality of available interpreters.

Question L: How often during your tour of duty, if ever, did you find yourself with no other Americans or English-speaking Vietnamese around? (19)

The data indicated that communication in English, either directly or by means of an interpreter, was not always a possibility for the U. S. officers included in this sample. In fact, 27% of the U. S. advisors reported that they often or very often found themselves with no other Americans or English-speaking Vietnamese around. An additional 40% occasionally found themselves in these circumstances, 23% had this experience a few times, and 5% indicated they found themselves in this situation only once or twice during their tours of duty. Only 5% escaped such an experience completely. Because of the strong likelihood that the advisor could communicate only ineffectively (if at all) under these circumstances, it would seem important to note where such conditions occurred.

Isolation from English speakers was as likely to occur at a base camp as in large towns, but was much more probable, by a factor of approximately 2 1/2 in "the field" than in either of the former. Assuming that it might have been useful to communicate to other persons in such circumstances, it would appear that a number of advisors would have found some Vietnamese speaking capability quite useful.

Question M: What was your general feeling about the accuracy of the translations? (20)

Interpreter accuracy was regarded as good by 31% of the sample; 41% reported it as fair, 9% indicated it to be poor, and 6% selected the descriptive term "lousy." Few of the advisors (9%) felt that the accuracy of the interpreters' translations was top-notch. These data are in basic

agreement with those reported by advisors in Korea in a report by Hausrath.[5] Advisors in the Korean sample also reported their interpreters' skills as ranging from excellent to poor with the overall situation being far from ideal.

Despite some apparent utility, responses to the questionnaire present a rather consistent picture of a nearly complete lack of Vietnamese language capability on the part of this group of U. S. Army officers. Only two persons out of the entire sample had received any training in the Vietnamese language before being assigned to Vietnam. (q.v., Questionnaire Item 27.) (The situation with regard to Vietnamese language training has since changed rather drastically, of course.)

Question N: About how much of spoken Vietnamese did you understand in the early part of your tour of duty? (2)

Question O: How much Vietnamese language capability did you pick up there during your tour of duty? (8)

Under conditions of no language instruction, it is certainly not surprising to learn that none of the advisors reported understanding as much as 15% of spoken Vietnamese in the early part of their tour of duty. Only 3% of the advisors reported understanding about 5%, and 23% reported understanding about 1%. The remaining 74% of the group indicated they understood no spoken Vietnamese in the early part of their tour.

The situation appears to improve only to a limited extent during the advisors' stay in Vietnam. With regard to the development of Vietnamese language capability while there, more than three-fourths of the group reported "none at all" (14%) or "a very slight amount" (64%). In a subsequent part of the questionnaire (Item No. 14) the 14% finding increased to 21% reporting no learning of Vietnamese at all during their tour, so that we may say that approximately one man out of every six was aware of absolutely no improvement during his stay in Vietnam.

On the other hand, the existence of some motivation to learn and the need for some Vietnamese language capability is reflected in the fact that 21% of the officers indicated they picked up "a fair amount," and one advisor even reported learning "a great amount." To no surprise, no one indicated that he had perfected his Vietnamese during his tour of duty.

Some additional evidence with regard to the perceived need of Vietnamese language capability is found in the fact that, given three statements from which to choose (Item No. 15), 98% of the sample selected the statement, "With more extensive language training, I might have gotten

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[5] Hausrath, A. H. The KMAG advisor: Role and problems of the military advisor in developing an indigenous army for combat operations in Korea. Technical Memorandum ORO-T-355, Tactics Division, Infantry Group, Operations Research Office, The John Hopkins University, 1957, pp. 67-72.

to the point where I could understand and speak more Vietnamese." Two of the advisors (2% of the sample) reported, "The language training I received matched my needs exactly." No one selected the third statement, "Actually I had learned more Vietnamese than I used over there."

The results for a subsequent item attempting to measure directly the perceived need for speaking Vietnamese (Item No. 21) gave less clear-cut results and demonstrate, if anything, that such a perceived need is by no means universal to this group. Again asking the respondents to select from three statements the one most accurate about themselves during their Vietnamese tour resulted in the following distribution: "I tried to use Vietnamese as often as possible, sometimes at the risk of making a fool of myself," 40%; "I knew very little Vietnamese and didn't really feel the need for more," 24%; "I rarely used even the little Vietnamese I had learned," 36%. It would seem, thus, that 60% of this group either rarely used or didn't feel the need for any more than a little Vietnamese. These data agree rather closely with the 61% who reported no more than occasional attempts to say anything in Vietnamese to Question H above. The ways in which an officer's responses on this item are associated with his witnessing or non-witnessing of combat will be considered subsequently.

Critical Verbal Communication Incidents

The collection of critical incidents in interpersonal verbal communication situations was the primary purpose in carrying out this survey. We were seeking such utterances and situations for which Vietnamese speaking and understanding ability would be a decided asset, and inability for which might prove debilitating, hampering, or at worst fatal.

Question P: Imagine yourself going to Vietnam, just for a moment. Based on your experience there already, please list below, in English, ten phrases, questions, and/or commands which you think you would find most useful to be able to say in Vietnamese, whether you knew them at the time or not. (9)

Question Q: Please list below five specific situations which, if met up with again, would make you wish that you understood more of what was being said in Vietnamese. (12)

The large pool of phrases, questions, terms and situations which these questions yielded was analyzed in order to arrive at the important communication parameters. The analysis was carried out with greater weight being assigned to the responses of those officers who had actually made an effort to speak some Vietnamese (i.e., those 22% of the sample who had answered Question G above in the affirmative) than to those who had not.

Four major content categories emerged from the analysis: (1) Social amenities, that is, greetings, introductions, invitations, toasts, please, thank you, excuses, identification. (2) Immediate action phrases, that is, requests or orders to a driver, combat personnel, counterparts, and others. (3) Queries for information concerning names, needs, places,

password, people, time, quantity, distance, direction, money and family. (4) Guidance and advisory terms, that is, compliments, suggestions and instructions. The development of programmed lessons is currently proceeding largely on the basis of this vocabulary material.

Non-duty Contacts with Vietnamese Nationals

Of concern here was the extent of interaction between the Americans and Vietnamese nationals other than the counterpart, as well as the degree of leisure time fraternization with the counterparts.

Question R: Did you employ Vietnamese personnel in servant capacities? (25)

More than three-fourths (79%) of this group of Americans employed Vietnamese personnel in servant capacities. It would appear, thus, that interaction with servants was a major form of non-duty contact with the Vietnamese people.

Question S: About how much of your non-duty leisure time in Vietnam was spent in the company of one or more Vietnamese? (other than servants) (24)

Substantiating the immediately preceding inference, one-third (34%) of this group reported spending 5% or less of their leisure time in the company of indigenous personnel other than servants. Another quarter (26%) reported that they were in the company of Vietnamese 15% of their non-duty time, and an additional 22% indicated that they were in such company 25% of their leisure time. Some 18% of the group indicated that they spent 50% or more of such time in the company of Vietnamese persons, including one individual who, by means of some sort of arrangement (not described) reported that 100% of his non-duty, leisure time was spent in the company of at least one Vietnamese.

Further, in regard to the amount of U. S.-Vietnamese fraternization, social function was defined for respondents as a gathering of one or more Americans and Vietnamese who engaged in conversation while eating, drinking, sight-seeing or participating in other cultural and recreational activities. The advisors were then asked how many invitations they received from members of the Vietnamese Armed Forces or Vietnamese civilians to be their guest at a social function during a typical month of their tour. They were also asked to indicate how often during the average month members of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, their families and friends were the advisors' guests at social functions.

The data clearly show (see Table 4) that both on invitations received from Vietnamese and frequency of being host to Vietnamese, the modal category is one or two such occurrences per month. The data also indicated that about 29% of the U. S. Army officers received more than two social invitations per month, whereas only about 17% acted as host to Vietnamese more than twice per month. In other words, the respondent was considerably more likely to be the recipient of social invitations than to be the host.

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGES OF U. S. ARMY OFFICERS REPORTING GIVEN FREQUENCIES OF SOCIAL INTERCOURSE WITH VIETNAMESE NATIONALS

Frequency During Typical Month	Host to Vietnamese (N = 96)	Invitations from Vietnamese (N = 97)
None	3	0
Any - 2	80	71
3 - 5	10	19
6 - 8	2	7
9 - 11	1	2
12 or more	3	1
Totals	99%	100%

Questionnaire Response Contingencies

Two general provisos must be made explicit before examining the data hereunder. The first is that not all two-way combinations of items were or could be tested for association, primarily because the questionnaire was not designed for this purpose. Secondly, extrapolation of any of these relationships to the larger population of current U. S. military advisory personnel in Vietnam or elsewhere is hazardous. Such extrapolation to other groups and environments is justified only to the extent that they resemble this sample and its environment. For example, even a statistically ideal sample of all 1960 - 1962 U. S. returnees from Vietnam would not have permitted straightforward generalization of findings to situations controlled by different political regimes and behavior prescribed by different selection and training practices. Keeping these qualifications in mind, we may proceed to examine some provocative response contingencies.

Lenth of an individual's Vietnamese tour was found to be related to two other factors. The percentage of non-duty leisure time a U. S. officer spent in the company of one or more Vietnamese (other than servants) was found to be associated ($X^2 = 12.5$, d.f. = 4, $p < .02$) with the number of months the individual had spent there. In comparison to those individuals who were in Vietnam twelve months or less, officers who were in Vietnam more than twelve months tended to report spending larger percentages of their free time with Vietnamese personnel. Further analysis is, of course, inferential. While it is true that the longer a man was there, the greater the chances were to make friends with indigenous personnel and, hence, the greater the possibility for fraternization, it may also be true that the longer an advisor was on the job, the more he realized the basic political-attitudinal functions he was carrying out which could be done as well or better informally on "leisure time" than formally on the job.

A second finding of interest was that the frequency with which misunderstandings with one's Vietnamese counterpart were reported was also found to be contingent ($X^2 = 6.7$, d.f. = 2, $p < .05$) with the number of months the advisor was in Vietnam. Officers who were in Vietnam fewer than twelve months reported misunderstandings relatively less often than would be expected by chance. A greater proportion of these short-termers, as compared to those who were in Vietnam twelve months or longer, reported these misunderstandings as never occurring. It would seem that the longer a man is on the job in Vietnam the more sensitive he becomes to interpersonal communication difficulties. A nod of the head or a verbal "yes" may be taken at face value by the short-termer, but may be interpreted more accurately by the long-termer. Despite the Vietnamese counterpart's apparent English ability (q.v., Question E), extended exposure may well convince the American that some of the subtleties of English either tend to get lost or misinterpreted in the process of interpersonal communication.

The factor of presence or absence during combat was related to several other characteristics. For one, this factor was found to be associated ($X^2 = 7.0$, d.f. = 2, $p < .05$) with the amount of Vietnamese language capability picked up during a tour of duty. Those witnessing combat operations developed their Vietnamese language capability to a greater extent than those never present during combat.

Furthermore, U. S. officers present when the enemy was engaged in combat were more likely to have uttered the phrases, commands, questions, etc., they had lysted as most useful than those officers who had not been so present ($X^2 = 4.1$, d.f. = 1, $p < .05$). Moreover, those witnessing combat were likely to report that they normally used Vietnamese phrases as often as possible. The group that did not witness combat tended to be satisfied with their minimum level of Vietnamese ($X^2 = 7.2$, d.f. = 2, $p < .05$). All three of these not unexpected findings probably reflect motivational

dynamics operating in foreign language performance. The apparent interpretation of these data is that under conditions of stress, self-expression in the indigenous language is reinforced (i.e., is successful in controlling some aspect of the speaker's environment) and that, therefore, the U. S. advisor in the situation becomes more prone to express himself in that medium.

Further illustrating this same plausible dynamic was the tendency ($p < .10$) noted on another questionnaire item for presence during combat to be associated with high frequency of Vietnamese utterances in general. This finding is akin to the preceding one, of course. In addition, we discovered in the data a tendency ($p < .10$) for individuals who had found themselves isolated from other English speakers to be those who developed some Vietnamese capability during their tour of duty. Conversely, individuals who were never so isolated developed less Vietnamese capability than would be expected by chance.

Synthesis of these few observations would clearly lead to the conclusion that respondents who were exposed to appropriate environmental conditions tended to develop and utilize their Vietnamese response repertoire as the operant behavior it is.

Two other noteworthy contingencies were found in the data, both related to how often a respondent attempted to say anything in Vietnamese. In agreement with the impression of language teachers, a significant relationship was found between the frequency of Vietnamese utterances and the (albeit self-perceived) growth in Vietnamese repertoire ($X^2 = 86.0$; d.f. = 4; $p < .001$). That is to say, a marked relationship exists between the Vietnamese language capability an advisor reported picking up during his tour of duty and his report of the frequency with which he attempted to say anything in Vietnamese. The more frequently advisors attempted to speak Vietnamese, the greater the language development they reported. The less frequent the attempts were made, the less the reported growth. Undoubtedly there is some circularity in the relationship, but making utterance attempts is clearly the logical antecedent to repertoire development.

Also related to how much Vietnamese an individual attempted to utter was the frequency of social invitations he received ($X^2 = 3.9$; d.f. = 1, $p < .05$). Without asserting any antecedent--consequent relationship, we found that those individuals who attempted to speak Vietnamese more often were a good deal more likely to receive a greater number of social invitations than would be expected by chance and vice versa.

And, finally, we were able to corroborate empirically the common-sense notion that the less English the Vietnamese counterpart understood, the more likely the American would be to employ gestures and other paralinguistic features in communicating with him ($X^2 = 24.5$; d.f. = 2; $p < .01$).

It appears then that for this group: the length of a man's tour of duty; his witnessing or non-witnessing of combat activities; the frequency of his isolation from English speakers; the number of his attempts to use the Vietnamese language; and his Vietnamese counterpart's English ability are related to statistically reliable extents to several other behavioral variables. These latter include: the frequency of perceived misunderstandings, the amount of U. S.-ARVN fraternization, the amount of growth in Vietnamese capability, the extent of utilization of the Vietnamese language, and degree of dependence on paralinguistic means of communication.

SUMMARY

The findings reported in this paper are based upon the analysis of questionnaire data from 97 field and company grade United States Army officers who had served tours of duty in South Vietnam, had returned to the United States between 1960 and 1962, and were stationed in the United States when asked to complete the questionnaire. The survey was conducted as part of a project to develop a short Vietnamese language course.

Analysis of the survey data yielded the following general findings.

1. Length and character of duty assignment:

a. The typical respondent served a twelve-month tour of duty in Vietnam.

b. About half of the sample witnessed combat while in Vietnam.

c. The respondents advised ARVN and para-military units in a variety of problem areas, most commonly in tactics training and basic training.

2. Methods of communication between United States and Vietnamese personnel:

a. The American and his Vietnamese counterpart generally communicated with one another in English.

b. Over half of the respondents in this sample had counterparts who spoke and/or understood English at least "very well." Counterparts speaking and/or understanding less than "a fair amount" of English were apparently not very common for this group of American officers.

c. About half of the Americans reported that paralinguistic features (e.g., gestures) were of moderate to tremendous importance in communicating with counterparts.

d. The majority of the respondents indicated they made no more than occasional attempts to say anything in Vietnamese.

e. Nearly all of the respondents used an interpreter at some time during their tours of duty in Vietnam.

3. Importance of language problems:

a. Only two persons in this rather early sample of returnees had received any training in Vietnamese before their assignment to Vietnam. None of the respondents felt they could understand as much as 15% of spoken Vietnamese in the early part of their tours, and the majority picked up none at all or a slight amount while actually in Vietnam.

b. The Americans differed considerably among themselves in their views as to whether they could have advised earlier and more effectively on their most important problems if they had known more Vietnamese. However, their most common view was a strong affirmative.

c. The majority of the sample reported that misunderstandings attributable to language problems seldom or never occurred between themselves and their counterparts.

d. Isolation from English speakers was a rather common occurrence for the advisors, especially "in the field."

e. Interpreters' skills were estimated as ranging from very poor to top-notch, with the overall situation being far from ideal.

4. Critical verbal communication incidents:

A large collection of material was generated by the respondents when probed concerning utterances they considered most useful for them to have been able to say in Vietnamese, and situations in which they felt that understanding some Vietnamese would have been advantageous.

Four major vocabulary categories emerged from this pool of phrases, questions and situations:

a. social amenities

b. immediate action phrases

c. queries

d. guidance and advisory terms

The utterances in each of these basic categories are being used in establishing the actual content of a short, programmed course to enhance the Vietnamese language capability of Armed Forces personnel for whom more extensive language training is not feasible.

5. Non-duty contacts with Vietnamese nationals:

a. Interactions with servants was a major form of the Americans' non-duty contact with the Vietnamese people.

b. About one-third of the respondents reported spending no more than 5% of their leisure time in the company of Vietnamese who were not servants.

c. Americans received social invitations from the Vietnamese more frequently than they were hosts to the Vietnamese. The vast majority of the respondents reported having Vietnamese nationals as their guests at social functions once or twice a month.

6. Questionnaire response contingencies:

a. The length of the advisor's tour of duty was found to be significantly associated with the percentage of his leisure time spent in the company of Vietnamese nationals and also with the frequency with which the advisor reported misunderstandings with his counterparts attributable to lack of knowledge of each other's language. These findings suggest that, with increasing amounts of time in Vietnam, the advisor not only comes to associate more frequently with the Vietnamese, but also becomes increasingly sensitive to interpersonal communication difficulties.

b. Advisors who witnessed combat while in Vietnam were found more likely (than those who had not witnessed combat) to report having picked up relatively more Vietnamese language capability during their tours, having uttered the phrases, commands, questions, etc., they had listed as most useful, and generally having used Vietnamese as often as possible.

c. The more frequently the advisor reported attempting to say anything in Vietnamese, the more likely he was to report picking up relatively more Vietnamese language capability during his tour, and to report receiving greater numbers of social invitations from Vietnamese persons.

d. The more frequently the advisor reported having been isolated from other English-speaking persons, the more likely he was to report picking up relatively more Vietnamese language capability during his tour of duty.

e. The less English the advisor reported his counterpart as understanding, the greater the importance the advisor was likely to attach to the use of gestures, nods, etc., in communicating with him.

In the absence of opportunities for direct observation of language communication problems in the field, a survey such as this, consisting of relative frequency distribution data and response interrelationships, serves a useful purpose in specifying actual job-necessary content for short but functional programmed language courses.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Human Resources Research Office
The George Washington University

Vietnamese Specialist Questionnaire

1. How many months were you in Vietnam?

_____ 6 months or less

_____ 7 through 11 months

_____ 12 months

_____ more than 12 months Specify:_____

2. About how much of spoken Vietnamese did you understand in the early part of your tour of duty?

100%	75%	50%	25%	15%	5%	1%	0%
____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____

3. How often did you attempt to say anything in Vietnamese (other than names)?

_____ Never _____ Once or twice _____ Occasionally

_____ Often _____ Almost always _____ All the time

4. How much English did your Vietnamese military counterpart understand? (If you had more than one, the one for the longest stretch of your tour of duty.)

_____ Understood absolutely no English

_____ A couple of words only

_____ A fair amount

_____ Understood very well

_____ Understood like an American

5. How much English did your Vietnamese military counterpart speak? (If you had more than one, the one for the longest stretch of your tour of duty.)

_____ Spoke absolutely none

_____ A couple of words only

_____ A fair amount

_____ Talked very well

_____ Talked like an American

6a. As a rule, how did you and your Vietnamese counterpart communicate?

_____ I spoke English to him; he spoke Vietnamese which was translated by an interpreter.

_____ An interpreter translated both my English into Vietnamese and my counterpart's Vietnamese into English.

_____ We spoke to each other in English.

6b. How often, if ever, did any misunderstandings occur between yourself and your counterpart because you didn't know each other's language well enough?

_____ Never _____ Seldom _____ Often _____ Always

7. If you were sent to Vietnam again, in what area would you like greater Vietnamese-language capability? (Number: 1 for most important, 2 for next, and 3 for least.)

_____ Job talk (military, technical)

_____ General social conversation (greetings, introductions, etc.)

_____ Tourist talk (shopping, restaurants, etc.)

8. How much Vietnamese language capability did you pick up there during your tour of duty?

_____ None at all

_____ A very slight amount

_____ A fair amount

_____ A great amount

_____ To the point of perfection

9. Imagine yourself going to Vietnam again, just for a moment. Based on your experience there already, please list below, in English, 10 phrases, questions, and/or commands which you think you would find most useful to be able to say in Vietnamese, whether you knew them at the time or not. Express yourself naturally, and do try to give us 10, please.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

6. _____

_____

7. _____

_____

8. _____

_____

9. _____

_____

10. _____

_____

10. Comments: _____

_____

_____

11. By and large, did you generally say the above things in Vietnamese when you were there?

_____ No _____ Yes

If No, why not?

_____ Unable to say them in Vietnamese and unnecessary. Other party understood English or we had an interpreter.

_____ Able to say them but unnecessary to use Vietnamese. Other party understood English or we had an interpreter.

12. Now, please list below 5 specific situations which, if met up with again, would make you wish that you understood more of what was being said in Vietnamese. Kindly take time to think for a moment. This is important.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

13. Comments: _____

_____

_____

14. Where, if at all, did you learn your most useful Vietnamese vocabulary?

_____ "On the job" in Vietnam

_____ In a formal training course in the U. S.

_____ Elsewhere. Where? _____

_____ Learned none

15. Which one statement best describes your feeling?

_____ With more extensive language training, I might have gotten to the point where I could understand and speak more Vietnamese.

_____ The language training I received matched my needs exactly.

_____ Actually, I had learned more Vietnamese than I used over there.

16. In what kind of problem areas did your official advisory duties fall? (Indicate: 1 for most frequent, 2 for next most frequent, etc.)

_____ Acquisition and/or storage of equipment or material.

_____ Operator misuse and/or lack of knowledge and training in proper operation of equipment.

_____ Maintenance and/or calibration of equipment.

_____ Matters concerning organization of ARVN.

_____ Operational planning.

_____ Tactics training.

_____ Combat operations.

_____ Transportation of APVN Troops.

_____ Other. Specify: _____

17. What was <u>the most important</u> problem on which you advised a counterpart? Description of the problem.

a. Briefly describe the situation as it existed before you gave any advice or made recommendations.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. Might you have become aware of this problem earlier, or advised more effectively had you known more Vietnamese?

_____ Positively, yes

_____ Yes

_____ Yes, probably

_____ Probably not

_____ No

_____ Absolutely not

c. In communicating with your counterpart, to what extent, if any, were gestures, nods, pointing, showing, etc., a factor?

_____ Not at all

_____ To a slight extent

_____ To a moderate extent

_____ To a great extent

_____ To a tremendous extent

18. During your tour of duty in Vietnam, were you personally ever present when the enemy was engaged in active combat?

_____ Yes _____ No

19. How often during your tour of duty, if ever, did you find yourself with no other Americans or English-speaking Vietnamese around?

_____ Very often

_____ Often

_____ Occasionally

_____ A few times

_____ Once or twice

_____ Never

If this did happen to you, was it in:

_____ the field

_____ base camp

_____ Saigon or other large town

20. Did you ever use an interpreter, on or off the job?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, what was your general feeling about the accuracy of the translations?

_____ Top notch

_____ Good

_____ Fair

_____ Poor

_____ Lousy

If yes, in what situations did you generally (or ever) use an interpreter?

_____ With military counterpart on the job

_____ With civilians as part of the job

_____ With counterpart on non-duty time

_____ With civilians outside the job

21. Select the one most accurate statement about yourself during your tour in Vietnam.

_____ I rarely used even the little Vietnamese I had learned.

_____ I knew very little Vietnamese and didn't really feel the need for more.

_____ I tried to use Vietnamese as often as possible, sometime at the risk of making a fool of myself.

If a social function refers to gatherings of one or more Americans and Vietnamese who engage in conversation while eating, drinking, sightseeing or participating in other cultural and recreational activities:

22. How many invitations did you receive from members of the Vietnamese Armed Forces or Vietnamese civilians to be <u>their</u> guest at a social function during an average month of your tour?_____

23. During a typical month, how often were members of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, their families, and friends <u>your</u> guests at social functions?_____

24. About how much of your <u>non-duty</u> leisure time in Vietnam was spent in the company of one or more Vietnamese? (Other than servants)

_____ 0% _____ 1% _____ 5% _____ 15% _____ 25% _____ 50% _____ 75% _____ 100%

25. Did you employ Vietnamese personnel in servant capacities?

_____ Yes _____ No

26. During your tour of duty, what was the one spot or situation where you just could not get by with using English and you had to know some French or Vietnamese?

_____

_____

_____

27. Did you receive any Vietnamese language training before your assignment to Vietnam?

_____ No _____ Yes

If Yes, about how many class hours were devoted to language instruction?

_____ class hours

Comments (if any):